

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 FDRE-00 SWF-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

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SUBJECT: SAN PEDRO SULA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PAYS HOMAGE TO
AMBASSADOR SANCHEZ AND US GOVERNMENT AND PROPLE FOR DISASTER
ASSISTANCE

1. THE PRESIDENT OF THE SAN PEDRO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,
GOBRIEL MAJIA, INVITED AMBASSADOR SANCHEZ TO ATTEND
SPECIAL DECEMBBER 10 ASSEMBLY TO PAY HOMAGE TO THE U.S. FOR
ITS HELP FOLLOWING HURRICANE FIFI. ALTHOUGH EMBASSY
ADVISED MEJIA THAT AMBASSADOR WOULD NOT RETURN FROM HIS
US TRIP IN TIME AND DISCREETLY SUGGESTED BOTH RESHAPING
AND POSTPONEMENT OF THIS PROGRAM, EMBASSY WAS URGED TO
SEND DELEGATION TO REPRESENT AMBASSADOR "SINCE CHAMBER
WAS COMMITTED TO DECEMBER 10 DATE."

2. FOLLOWING TELCON WITH AMBASSADOR, DCM DESIGNATED AID
DIRECTOR FRANK KIMBALL AND PAO JOHN GRIDDITHS TO ATTEND
PROGRAM HELD IN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HEADQUARTERS, SAN PEDRO.
AID REGIONAL COORDINATOR ANTHONY CAUTERUCCI AND BNC
DIRECTOR JAMES FINDLEY ALSO PRESENT.

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3. THE CEREMONY WAS ATTENDED BY THE DISTRICT GOVERNOR, THE SAN PEDRO MAYOR; EX-FORNMIN BATRES; AND OVER 200 CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEMBERS. KEYNOTE SPEAKERS WERE MEJIA AND CAMILO RIVERA GIRON, PRESIDENT OF THE HONDURAN COUNCIL FOR PRIVATE BUSINESS (COHEP). MEJIA, IN THE NAME OF HONDURAN NORTH COAST PRIVATE INDUSTRY, PRAISED THE US FOR "ITS PROMPT AND EFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE TO HONDURAS FOLLOWING THIS NATIONAL DISASTER AND FOR ITS CONTINUAL HELP DURING THE RECONSTRUCTION STAGE." HE SINGLED OUT THE AMBASSADOR'S PERSONAL VISITS TO THE STRICKEN AREAS AS A "TANGIBLE EXPRESSION OF THE CONCERN SHOWN BY THE ENTIRE US PEOPLE." MEJIA ALSO PAID TRIBUTE TO OTHER NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR HELP. HE THEN POINTED OUT THAT THE HONDURANS "SHOULD PUT ASIDE ANY DIFFERENCES AND JOIN TOGETHER NOT ONLY IN REBUILDING THE COUNTRY, BUT, ALSO, IN OVERCOMING THE POVERTY WHICH PLAGUES OUR COUNTRY." COHEP PRESIDENT RIVERA ECHOED MEJIA'S REMARKS, STRESSING "...THAT THE MOMENT HAS COME FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO SHOW THAT IT IS THE MOST DYNAMIC AND DETERMINING FACTOR IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF OUR NATION AND WE ARE READY TO PLAY SUCH A ROLE."

4. AFTER ACKNOWLEDGING THIS HOMAGE TO AMB. SANCHEZ AND EXPLAINING HIS ABSENCE, AID DIRECTOR KIMBALL BRIEFLY DETAILED THE USG AND PRIVATE SECTOR RESPONSE TO THIS NATIONAL CALAMITY. HE THEN EMPHASIZED THE CLOSE ANBEPRODUCTIVE COORDINATION OF THESE ACTIVITIES WITH THE GOH AND PRAISED IT AND PRIVATE HONDURAN ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR EXCELLENT EFFORTS. THE INTERNATIONAL TEAMWORK EFFORT WAS ALSO STRESSED AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE DECEMBER 6-7 INTERAGENCY DONOR MTG. HELD IN TEGUCIGALPA.

5. AUDIENCE REACTION WAS WARM AND FRIENDLY TO THE ENTIRE PROGRAM. RECEPTION AND SUPPER FOLLOWED.

6. NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE WAS EXTENSIVE AND POSITIVE. SAN PEDRO CH. 7 AND TWO LOCAL RADIO STATIONS COVERED LIVE AND NATION-WIDE CH. 5 DID VIDEO FOR SUNDAY MORNING NEWS SHOW. ALL THREE SAN PEDRO DAILIES (OPPOSITION LA PRENSA AND LA NOTICIA; PRO-GOH TIEMPO) RAN FRONT-PAGE PHOTO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FEATURES AND INTERIOR PAGE DETAILING EVENT AND SPEECH EXCERPTS.

7. COMMENT: IN VIEW SAN PEDRO SULA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OBVIOUSLY CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH COHEP WHICH HAS BEEN VERY CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT AND HAS BEEN PRESSURING GOH TO DEFINE POLICIES CONFLICTING WITH PRIVATE SECTOR INTEREST, EMBASSY WAS CONCERNED OVER POSSIBILITY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MIGHT USE HOMAGE TO AMBASSADOR AS VEHICLE FOR HIGHLY

PUBLICIZED CRITICISM OF GOH DURING AS OCCASION MARKED
BY OFFICIAL USG PRESENCE. POSSIBILITY OF OFFENDING BY
SINGLING OUT U.S., OTHER COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS WHOSE CONTINUING CONTRIBUTIONS TO HONDURAS
IS VITALLY NEEDED WAS ANOTHER POINT OF CONCERN.
HAPPILY, APART FROM EXPECTABLE REFERENCES BY CHAMBER
AND COHEP PRESIDENTS TO "TIME-IS-RIPE" FOR PRIVATE SECTOR
INVOLVEMENT IN RECONSTRUCTION STAGE, THESE CONCERNS DID
NOT MATERIALIZE. ENTIRE CEREMONY AND ATTENDANT NEWS
MEDIA COVERAGE EMERGED AS EVIDENTLY SINCERE RECOGNITION
OF AMBASSADOR FOR HIS ROLE IN COORDINATING USG EFFORT
AND AS SYMBOL OF OVERALL US ASSISTANCE. BOTH HONDURAN
AND EMB SPEAKERS ALSO HIGHLIGHTED IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION IN RELIEF AND RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE.
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